WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN JAPAN
—DOES ENTREPRENEURSHIP OFFER WORK–LIFE BALANCE FOR WOMEN?—
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CONTENTS

• Introduction
• Research Question
• Findings & Analysis
• Conclusion
Introduction

Does entrepreneurship offers work-life balance (WLB) for Japanese women?

Obstacles of Women’s Career

- Postwar Employment System
- Gendered Division of Labor
- Women divided into ELITE or INFERIOR
Emerging Entrepreneurship

Starting business could be one of the ways to “Come back to work force” and work flexible.

(The Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, 2005)

Situation of Entrepreneurs

- Low level entrepreneurial activities, decreasing number of female entrepreneurs
- Small scale and easy to disappear
- Considerable divorce rate

※About 70% of female entrepreneurs are satisfied with their work-life balance even though about 60% of female entrepreneur’s work time increased (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry 2012).
Research Question

Are female entrepreneurs satisfied with their WLB?

“Sole proprietors or Corporation who have submitted a written notice

1) Participant observation
2) Questionnaire
3) Semi-structured Interview

Definition of “Work-life Balance”

“Individual citizen, while achieving their full potential and sense of fulfillment through work, in addition to accomplishing their work-life responsibilities, regardless of household or regional life, can reach the mid to late stages of life while raising a child and simultaneously selecting/realizing a diverse set of living styles”

(The Cabinet Office, 2007)
Findings & Analysis

Are entrepreneurs really satisfied with their WLB?

- How do they define “WLB”?  
- After starting business, has the level of satisfaction for WLB changed, and why?

Perspective applied in Analysis: marital status, have children or not
### Findings - Definition of WLB -

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>With Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Life</strong></td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Mothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work</strong></td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>With Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
<td></td>
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- **Single**: Perspective of **Time**, Life and Work are generally considered separately
- **Married**: Between “Single” and “with Children” way of thinking
- **With Children**: Perspective of **Accomplishment**, work is a part of Life

### Findings - Satisfaction for their WLB -

**Single**: **Decrease in Satisfaction.**

*(Cannot take enough time for Life)*
**Findings - Satisfaction for their WLB -**

**Married:**

**Perspective of Time:** Increase in satisfaction  
(Clear definition between Life/Work)

**Perspective of Accomplishment:** Decrease in satisfaction  
(Can no longer focus entirely on Work)

**With children:** Increase in satisfaction.  
(Can make priorities on family when needed)

*they now have the above choice, which used to be difficult to get in companies where they previously worked*
**Analysis - WLB and Gendered Division of Labor -**

Stay single even though they are not satisfied with their WLB.  
=Internalize social norms for women, and refuse the role.  
face difficulty to achieve WLB

Change the definition of WLB  
=Economically rely on men by providing domestic work  
face difficulty to be economically independent

Make priories on family, and define WLB based on this priority  
= Internalize social norm /Economically relay on men  
Successful career and WLB are mutually exclusive

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**Findings - Partners' Cooperation -**

- **Material support**
- **Domestic life support**
- **Wife's work Support**
- **Psychological support**

Partner's Perspective
If Employed: Want to commit time/energy to domestic life, but difficult  
If Self-Employed: Possible to commit domestic life, but priories their work
Discussion  –What IS WLB?–

Even if the individual thinks she is achieving a WLB, there is always some unintentional sacrifice.

“ A person who have responsible for caring cannot use a symmetrical dice when s/he have free choice”

(Hara 2011:187)

Discussion about WLB lacks the viewpoint of gender equality and likewise, the social significance of domestic work.

Conclusion

• At this moment, starting a business is not ideal towards WLB

• The root of the problem regarding WLB is “the high commitment of hours required in career jobs” and the high commitment of hours required in household jobs.

• The meaning of WLB should be reconsidered with the primary viewpoint of gender equality.